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ASIDES AND SOLILOQUIES

EDITORIAL COMMENT

“Reconstructed, but unregenerated”, is the apt phrase which summarizes the view of the South which Mr. John Crowe Ransom presented in *Harper's* for June, 1929 (“The South Defends Its Heritage”). Political and economic reconstruction in the South rapidly proceeds, and threatens to obscure the divine secret which has sustained the quality of life distinctively and peculiarly Southern. The Southern Book Exposition, held in Atlanta, Georgia, in the Spring of this year notably exhibited the soundness of Mr. Ransom's interpretation of Southern culture and its repetition next Spring no doubt will aid the defenders of that culture against the peaceful penetration of what Mr. Ransom has also called “the second carpet-bag invasion”. “I was most interested in the Book Exposition at Atlanta,” said Henry Seidel Canby in an interview for *The Christian Science Monitor*, “and particularly in the variety and vigor of Southern literature which it so effectively displayed. Nothing has interested me more than the virility of the new Southern writers and their attempt to get at the realities of the South without sacrificing the peculiar Southern temper which differs and should differ from the middle West and North. I have always felt that the South, both historically and in the present, is the richest mine of literary material since the old days of New England before the Civil War.”

No one, of course, questions this virility. The South is notably contributing to the literary and cultural life of our country,

as so many essays in this and other literary magazines have amply demonstrated. But it still remains true that there is no wide Southern reading public upon which Southern writers may depend for recognition and support. No doubt, many Southerners are beginning to be aware of this deficiency; certainly the increasing number of literary review pages in Southern newspapers reveals a desire by Southern newspaper editors to stimulate interest in books among their readers.

Foremost among those who are cultivating reading and book-buying habits among Southerners may be mentioned John Southall Wilson, editor of *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Howard Mumford Jones, editor of *The Literary Lantern*, the editors of *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, and John H. McGinness, editor of *The Southwest Review* and literary editor of *The Dallas News*. Perhaps the most distinctive newspaper book page in the South is that of *The Nashville Tennessean*, edited by Donald Davidson whose weekly bulletins of literary comment have a special viewpoint and who has been unusually successful in securing the assistance of some of the best minds of the upper middle South in reviewing books for his page.

Recognition of Southern critics has been generous in the publishing centers of the country. Although none of the Monthly Book-Clubs has appointed any critic actually in touch with the literary and cultural conditions in the South to sit on its Board of Advisory Editors, mention must be made of Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch, formerly of Tennessee, now of New York City, who is on the Board of The Literary Guild. On the Board of Contributing Editors of *Creative Reading*, a service for the critical review of current books, published at Cambridge, Massachusetts, are the following Southern critics: Donald Davidson of Nashville, Addison Hibbard of the University of North Carolina, and the editor of this REVIEW.

What the South now needs is a reading public commensurable with its creative achievements: a need which has been kept firmly in mind by all of the editors of THE SEWANEE REVIEW since its establishment thirty-seven years ago.